

REMARKS

Claims 32-35 and 42-64 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-31, 36-41 and 65-67 have been canceled. Claims 32-34, 42, 48-52, and 64 have been amended. The specification has been amended to include a cross-reference to the parent application.

Applicant respectfully requests consideration of the application in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks appearing below.

Final Office Action of July 8, 2003 Regarding Parent Application

In an Office Action dated July 8, 2003 (“the 7/8/03 Office Action”), in connection with the parent application of this continuing application, the Examiner finally rejected claims 32, 33, 42-50, 52-54, 56-60 and 64 for the reasons discussed below. In response to the 7/8/03 Office Action, Applicant canceled these claims, allowing the Examiner to issue a Notice of Allowance for the non-rejected claims.

However, Applicant submits that claims rejected in the 7/8/03 Office Action are patentable over the references cited therein by the Examiner. Therefore, Applicant addresses the rejections of the 7/8/03 Office Action in connection with the present continuing application.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

In the 7/8/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 64 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter Applicant regards as his invention. In particular, the Examiner states that it is not clear what structural limitations are provided by the “vertical offset” and “lateral offset” language of claim 64 since an offset does not have a direction.

Applicant respectfully disagrees. Applicant does not agree with the Examiner’s position that an offset does not have a direction. As used in a number of technical arts, an offset can be expressed relative to a direction or frame of reference. For example, if a first point and a second point are spaced from one another and have their locations expressed relative to Cartesian coordinates, the second point may be considered to have four offsets relative to the first point, the offset along a linear line connecting the two points and the x, y and z components of this offset, which may be regarded as an x-offset, a y-offset and a z-offset. The x-offset is the distance from the first point to a plane that contains the second point and is perpendicular to the x-axis. Similarly, the y-offset is the distance from the first point to a plane that contains the

second point and is perpendicular to the y-axis. Likewise, the z-offset is the distance from the first point to a plane that contains the second point and is perpendicular to the z-axis.

With respect to the present invention, Applicant refers the Examiner to FIG. 5 of the present application. FIG. 5 shows at its right-hand side two offsets, a vertical offset V and a lateral offset L, which are components of the offset extending along a linear line connecting the two points at issue. These offsets can be related to the Cartesian z and x axes, respectively, that are often used to represent a vertical and horizontal axis, respectively. If the origin of the x and z axes is located in the plane of FIG. 5 at the concentric center of aperture 86, it can readily be seen that the z-offset corresponds to vertical offset V and the x-offset corresponds to lateral offset L. This concept can then be generalized to the first and second offsets of amended claim 64, wherein the directionality of the first and second offsets of the location where the force is applied to the engagement surface is related to the direction of a force, rather than x and y axes or other references. Relating amended claim 64 to FIG. 5, the first offset of claim 64 corresponds to vertical offset V between the concentric center of aperture 86 and the point of application of force U to engagement surface 120, and the second offset of claim 64 corresponds to lateral offset L between the concentric center of aperture 86 and the point of application of force U to engagement surface 120.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully asserts that the present rejection is improper.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Bejean et al.

In the 7/8/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 42-45, 52, 54, 56-60 and 64 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,954,358 to Bejean et al., stating Bejean et al. disclose all the elements of these claims. (Independent claims are underlined for convenience.) Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Bejean et al. disclose a snowboard binding that includes a latch (152) engaged with, and slidable along, a pair of elongate holes (154) in a pair of parallel wings (150a, 150b) of a jaw member (150). The jaw member includes a housing (156) for receiving a second anchoring device (11) affixed to the boot of a snowboarder. The latch is rotatable about a journal axis (153) and is biased into a closed position by two hairpin springs (157a, 157b). The latch also includes a lever (158) for moving the latch from its closed position to an open position.

When in its closed position, the latch retains the second anchoring member in the housing. In this connection, the latch has an engagement surface (not labeled in the drawings) that generally faces downward toward the upper surface of base 13. This engagement surface blocks the second anchoring device from disengaging the housing when the latch is in its closed position. It is noted that this engagement surface is located between the base of the binding and the rotational axis of the latch when the latch is in its closed position. The engagement surface is also located on the “inboard” side of the latch’s rotational axis, i.e., on the side of the rotational axis on which base 13 is located.

The Bejean et al. binding also includes a rotational guiding arrangement located on the opposite side of the binding from the latch. This guiding arrangement includes a pair of vertical wings (140, 141) connected together by a pin (142). The guiding arrangement is configured to receive a first anchoring device (10). The wings generally curve upward and outward from the base in a direction substantially away from the latch so that to engage the first anchoring device with the guiding arrangement, the snowboarder must move the first anchoring device from a position laterally spaced from the guiding arrangement away from the binding toward the binding. To complete the engagement of the boot with the binding, after the snowboarder engages the first anchoring device with the rotational guiding device, the snowboarder then rotates the boot so that second anchoring device 11 engages the housing of the jaw member and causes lever 158 to rotate clockwise, thereby allowing the second anchoring device to fully engage housing. When second anchoring device 11 is moved upward, it is inhibited from disengaging housing by interference of lever 158, which is inhibited from rotating counterclockwise from its rotational position shown in each of FIGS. 2 and 3 of the Bejean et al. patent.

Regarding amended independent claim 42, this claim has a number of features that Bejean et al. fail to disclose or suggest. The Examiner asserts that the Bejean et al. latch and catch are elements 15 and 151, respectively. This is not so. Element 15 is a latching mechanism, which includes, among other components, a latch (152) and a pair of vertical wings (150a, 150b). Element 151 is a spacer that connects the two vertical wings to each other.

First, whatever part of latch 152 may be considered a catch in terms of amended claim 42, the catch does not engage a cavity and, thus, is not adapted for removing coherent material from a cavity, as required by claim 42. Second, latch 152 of the Bejean et al. device

does not include any openings through which coherent material may be expelled, as claim 42 requires. Rather, latch 152 is essentially a solid member.

Since Bejean et al. fail to disclose or suggest at least these features of amended independent claim 42, the Bejean et al. patent cannot anticipate this claim, nor claims 43-47 that depend therefrom.

Regarding amended independent claim 52, this claim requires, among other things, a first means that is self-clamping into engagement with an engagement member upon application of a force by the engagement member to the first means. The Bejean et al. device does not include such a self-clamping means.

Applicant again refers the Examiner to FIG. 5 of the present application, this time to illustrate the limitation of “self-clamping into engagement with the engagement member” appearing in amended independent claim 52. Referring particularly to latch 80 on the right hand side of FIG. 5, the Examiner will note that upward force U applied to lower edge 120 of catch 116 is offset by a lateral offset L. Upward force U (applied by engagement member 26) at lateral offset L will tend to rotate latch 80 in a counterclockwise direction against engagement member 26, thereby clamping engagement member 26 firmly between latch 80 and latch 78 located on the opposite side of the binding. The greater applied force U, the greater the “self-clamping” action. Another way to explain the self-clamping feature of the present invention is to note that the self-clamping action in FIG. 5 is due to force U being applied outboard of the rotational axis of latch 80 relative to the binding. This arrangement causes latch 80 to rotate toward the engagement member.

Bejean et al. do not disclose or suggest any means that is self-clamping against an engagement member in the manner just described. For argument’s sake, the first and second anchoring devices (10, 11) of the Bejean et al. binding may be considered to be part of an “engagement member,” as this term is used in the present claims. No part of the Bejean et al. binding is “self-clamping,” i.e., is forced into engagement with the engagement member, upon application of a force by the engagement member to that means. Wings 140 are fixed and, therefore, cannot provide any self-clamping action. Latch 152 only resists any force applied to it by second anchoring device; it does not provide any self-clamping action. Since Bejean et al. patent does not disclose or suggest the self-clamping means of amended claim 52, the Bejean et

al. binding cannot anticipate amended independent claim 52, nor claim 54 that depends therefrom.

Regarding claim 56, this claim requires, among other things, second and third means for, respectively, ejecting coherent material from a cavity of a receiver of an engagement member and for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. Neither of the Bejean et al. "receivers," i.e., the first and second anchoring devices, has a cavity, as required by claim 56. Accordingly, the Bejean et al. binding does not include a means for ejecting a coherent material from a cavity. Similarly, the Bejean et al. binding does not have a means for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. Since Bejean et al. do not disclose or suggest at least these limitations of independent claim 56, the Bejean et al. binding cannot anticipate claim 56, nor claims 57-59 that depend from claim 56.

Regarding claim 64, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, that there be a vertical offset between the rotational axis of the latch such that the engagement surface is located above the rotational axis. In addition, amended claim 64, requires that there be a lateral offset between the rotational axis of the latch and the engagement surface that places the engagement surface further away from the centerline of the base than the rotational axis. The Bejean et al. latch does not satisfy either of these limitations. Rather, the engagement surface of the Bejean et al. latch is located both below and inward of the rotational axis of latch 152. Since Bejean et al. do not disclose or suggest at least these limitations of amended independent claim 64, the Bejean et al. binding cannot anticipate independent claim 64.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the anticipation rejection in view of the Bejean et al. patent is improper.

Bayer et al.

In the 7/08/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 52, 53 and 64 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,957,479 to Bayer et al., stating Bayer et al. disclose all the elements of these claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Referring particularly to FIGS. 22, 23A and 23B (see col. 12, line 15 to col. 13, line 25), Bayer et al. disclose a snowboard binding that comprises a binding element (1418) that includes a member (1430) having a recess (1432) for receiving a binding tab (1424) of a boot (1412). The binding element also includes a support structure (1436) to which member 1430 is rotatably attached. The binding element further includes a rotational spring (1442) that biases member

1430 into its open position. Member 1430 includes a pair of inclined members (1444) located on its backside. The inclined members engage a locking member (1448) that is slidably engaged with a shaft (1434) about which member 1430 is rotatable. The inclined members define an aperture (1446) for receiving the locking member when member 1430 is in its open position. The locking member is biased into engagement with one of the inclined members by a second spring (1456) that is disposed around shaft 1434 and acts along the direction of the shaft.

Regarding amended independent claim 52, this claim requires, among other things, a first means that is self-clamping into engagement with an engagement member upon application of a force by the engagement member to the first means. The self-clamping feature of the present invention is discussed above in connection with the anticipation rejection in view of the Bejean et al. patent. Again, self-clamping in the context of, e.g., latches 78 and 80 of FIG. 5 of the present application, means that the latch is rotated into tighter engagement with an engagement member upon application of increasing force to that latch by the engagement member. Like the Bejean et al. binding, Bayer et al. do not disclose or suggest any sort of “self-clamping means.”

Referring to FIGS. 22, 23A and 23B of the Bayer et al. patent, for the sake of argument, member 1430 may be considered the “means” of claim 52 that must be analyzed to determine if it is self-clamping relative to the “engagement member,” e.g. binding tab 1424 of boot 1412. It is readily seen that it is not. Rather, when boot 1412 is fully engaged with the Bayer et al. binding, binding tab 1424 is engaged in recess 1432 of member 1430 and member 1430 is prevented from rotating to its open position by locking member 1448. Any upward force applied by binding tab 1424 to member 1430 is resisted by locking member. Importantly, the application of such force does not cause member 1430 to rotate into tighter engagement with binding tab 1424. This is so because binding tab 124 is located inboard of the rotational axis of member 1430. Since Bayer et al. do not disclose or suggest at least the self-clamping means limitation of amended independent claim 52, the Bayer et al. binding cannot anticipate claim 52, nor claim 54 that depends therefrom.

Regarding independent claim 64, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, that the latch of the binding have a particular configuration wherein the engagement surface is located above an outboard (relative to the binding) of the rotational axis of the latch. In contrast, the engagement surface of recess 1432 of member 1430 is located inboard of the rotational axis of member 1430 (See FIG. 22 of the Bayer et al. patent). Because of this inboard location,

without locking member 1448 an upward force applied to the engagement surface of member 1430 would rotate the member generally counterclockwise and allow binding tab 1424 to disengage recess 1432. In contrast, the self-clamping means of the present invention would not allow such disengagement, but rather would generally act to prevent any disengagement by forcing the means into tighter engagement with the engagement member (in FIG. 5 of the present application, by causing latches 78, 80 to rotate toward the respective recesses 112). Since Bayer et al. do not disclose or suggest at least the self-clamping means limitation of amended independent claim 64, the Bayer et al. binding cannot anticipate this claim.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the anticipation rejection in view of the Bayer et al. patent is improper.

Morrow et al.

In the 7/08/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 52, 54, 56-59 and 64 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) or (e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,189,913 to Morrow et al., stating Morrow et al. disclose all the elements of these claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Morrow et al. disclose a step-in snowboard binding. In the embodiment of FIGS. 32 and 33, the binding includes a receiver (80') rotatably mounted to a shaft (90'). A spring (91) biases the receiver into its open position, i.e., in the direction of arc 315. The open position is shown in FIG. 32. When a pin (24) on a boot engages the receiver and pushes on the receiver to rotate the receiver into its closed position (FIG. 33), a lineal spring (306) urges a catch (304) into engagement with arm (88') of the receiver to prevent the receiver from rotating toward its open position. A snowboarder may release the receiver by rotating a lever arm (310) so as to move the catch, thereby compressing lineal spring 306. FIG. 9 shows a similar arrangement, with springs 94 biasing receiver 80 into its open position.

Regarding independent claim 52, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, a first means that is self-clamping against an engagement member. Again, as discussed above relative to the anticipation rejection in view of the Bejean et al. patent, “self-clamping” generally means that a force applied to the means by the engagement member causes the means to more tightly engage the engagement member. The Morrow et al. binding does not include any such self-clamping means. Rather, similar to the situations with the Bejean et al. and Bayer et al. bindings, when pin 24 of a boot acts upwardly against receiver 80', the receiver acts against a stop, in this case catch 304, that prevents the receiver from rotating and releasing pin 24. In no

manner is receiver 80' self-clamping against any part of the boot. Since Morrow et al. do not disclose or suggest at least the self-clamping means limitation of amended independent claim 52, the Morrow et al. binding cannot anticipate claim 52, nor claim 54 that depends therefrom.

Regarding claim 56, this claim requires, among other things, second and third means for, respectively, ejecting coherent material from a cavity of a receiver of an engagement member and for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. The Morrow et al. void 26 corresponds to the cavity of claim 56. The Morrow et al. binding does not include a means for ejecting a coherent material from the cavity. Rather, as a boot is engaged with the receiver 80', any coherent material present in void 26 of the boot would be compressed rather than ejected due to the closeness in the shape and size of the void and receiver. In addition, the Morrow et al. binding does not have a means for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. The coherent material will generally only be compressed within void 26, interfering with the proper engagement of pin 24 with receiver. No part of the Morrow et al. binding allows the coherent material to move away from void 26.

Regarding independent claim 64, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, the latch of the binding to have a particular configuration wherein the engagement surface is located above an outboard (relative to the binding) of the rotational axis of the latch. In contrast and referring to FIGS. 32 and 33 of the Morrow et al. patent, the engagement surface of the Morrow et al. receiver 80' of the Morrow et al. binding is located inboard of the rotational axis of receiver 80', i.e., the central longitudinal axis of shaft 90. Because of this inboard location, without catch 304 an upward force applied to the engagement surface of receiver 80' would rotate the receiver generally counterclockwise (relative to FIGS. 32 and 33) and allow pin 24 to disengage receiver 80'. In contrast, the self-clamping means of the present invention would not allow such disengagement, but rather would generally act to prevent any disengagement by forcing the means into tighter engagement with the engagement member (in FIG. 5 of the present application by causing latches 78, 80 to rotate toward the respective recesses 112). Since Morrow et al. do not disclose or suggest at least the self-clamping means limitation of amended independent claim 64, the Morrow et al. binding cannot anticipate this claim.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the anticipation rejection in view of the Morrow et al. patent is improper.

Karol

In the 7/08/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 52, 54, 56-58 and 64 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,690,351 to Karol, stating Karol discloses all the elements of these claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

As shown in FIGS. 8 and 9, Karol discloses a snowboard binding system that includes two opposing active engaging members (34a, 34b) that are slidingly moved into and out of engagement with respective receptacles (60) (FIG. 6) on a boot using a lever (72). Engagement members are biased into their engaged positions by respective lineal springs (130). FIG. 7 shows a similar arrangement with lineal biasing spring 44. Each engagement member has a curved top surface (52a, 52b) and a flat bottom surface (not labeled) (note, in FIG. 9 the curved top surface of member 42a is mislabeled “32a”). The curved top surfaces are for displacing the engagement members as a snowboarder steps into the binding. The flat bottom surfaces are for confronting and engaging surfaces (61) of the corresponding receptacles.

Turning to the present claims, independent claim 52, as amended, requires, among other things, a first means that is self-clamping against the engagement member. Again, as discussed above relative to the anticipation rejection in view of the Bejean et al. patent, “self-clamping” generally means that a force applied to the means by the engagement member causes the means to more tightly engage the engagement member. Karol does not disclose or suggest any such self-clamping means. When an upward force is applied to Karol’s engaging members 34a, 34b by boot plate 56, these members act against tops 40a, 40b of housings 36a, 36b. Engaging members merely provide resistance to the upward force. There is nothing in the configuration of Karol’s engaging members 34a, 34b, nor any other structure that Karol discloses, that provides a self-clamping feature, wherein the engaging members are clamped against the receptacle. Since Karol does not disclose or suggest at least the self-clamping means limitation of amended independent claim 52, the Karol binding cannot anticipate claim 52, nor claim 54 that depends therefrom.

Regarding claim 56, this claim requires, among other things, second and third means for, respectively, ejecting coherent material from a cavity of a receiver of an engagement member and for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. Neither of the Karol receptacles 60 is a cavity, as required by claim 56. Rather, each receptacle 60 is a rabbet. Accordingly, the Karol binding does not include a means for ejecting a coherent material from a

cavity. Similarly, the Karol binding does not have a means for allowing the coherent material to move away from the receiver. Since Karol does not disclose or suggest at least these limitations of independent claim 56, the Karol binding cannot anticipate claim 56, nor claims 57-59 that depend from claim 56.

Regarding independent claim 64, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, a latch pivotable relative to a base. The Karol binding does not include such a pivoting latch. Rather, the Karol binding has two sliding catches, i.e., engaging members 34a, 34b for engaging corresponding receptacles 60 of boot plate. In general, the only pivoting components of the Karol binding are the two levers 72, 118 used to slide engaging members 34a, 34b in and out of their respective housings 36a, 36b. These levers are not latches. Since Karol does not disclose or suggest at least the pivoting latch limitation of amended independent claim 64, the Karol et al. binding cannot anticipate this claim.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the anticipation rejection in view of the Karol patent is improper.

Warner

In the 7/08/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) or (e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,901,471 to Warner, stating Warner discloses all of the features of the binding of this claim. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Warner shows a snowshoe harness assembly that includes a front portion (54) and a back end (52) that are connected to one another with a length adjustment member (not labelled) that allows a snowshoer to adjust the distance between the front portion and back end so as to adjust the assembly to a particular size of boot. The harness assembly includes a first bale (56) located at the front end, i.e., toe end, of the assembly and a second bale located at the back end, i.e., the heel end, of the assembly. The first and second bales engage, respectively, the toe and heel portions of a boot. The harness further includes several adjustable straps for holding the assembly firmly on a boot.

Turning to rejected claim 32, this claim, as amended, requires, among other things, first and second means for releasably engaging first and second receivers that secure the engagement member to the binding. Warner does not disclose or suggest such means. Rather, Warner discloses a binding having conventional ski-binding-type bales and instep and ankle straps. In

the 7/8/03 Office Action, the Examiner asserted that the front bale (56) of the Warner binding corresponded to the first means of claim 32 as this claim stood prior to the 7/8/03 Office Action.

Carrying the Examiner's assertion forward to claim 32 as it presently stands, Applicant believes the Examiner would have to assert that the two vertical portions of bale 56 on opposite sides of the boot correspond to the first and second means of amended claim 32. Applicant believes this assertion is improper. However, even if made, these portions of the front bale do not satisfy the limitation of amended claim 32 that the first and second means secure the engagement member to the binding by their releasable engagement with corresponding first and second receivers. The vertical portions of the front bales at most inhibit side-to-side movement of the boot relative to the toe portion and do not secure the boot to the binding as required by amended claim 32. Since Warner does not disclose or suggest at least the securing limitation of amended independent claim 32, the Warner binding cannot anticipate this claim.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the anticipation rejection in view of the Warner patent is improper.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Warner/Polk, III et al.

In the 7/8/03 Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claim 33 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious in view of the Warner patent, discussed above, and U.S. Patent No. 5,794,362 to Polk, III et al., stating Warner discloses all of the elements of the binding of this claim except the use of a threaded rod in the length adjusting mechanism. The Examiner then states Polk, III et al. disclose a length adjusting mechanism that includes a threaded rod and asserts it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the Warner binding with the threaded-rod length adjusting mechanism of Polk, III et al. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Warner patent is as discussed above in connection with the anticipation rejection in view of the same patent.

Polk, III et al. disclose an athletic boot having an adjustable size. The boot includes a base portion (42) and a heel portion (40) slidably engaged with the base portion so as to allow the heel portion to be movable relative to the base portion to allow a user wearer to adjust the boot to the length of his/her foot. The heel portion is adjusted relative to the base portion using a

threaded rod (160)/fastener (86) arrangement whereby the position of the heel portion is adjusted by rotating the threaded rod relative to the fastener.

The Warner/Polk, III et al. combination would lack at least the securing limitation of amended claim 33 discussed above in connection with the anticipation rejection of claim 32 in view of the Warner patent. Neither the Warner patent nor Polk, III et al. patent disclose this limitation. In addition, this feature would not have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention in view of design choice. Accordingly, amended claim 33 is not obvious in view of the present combination.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the present rejection is improper.

Watson/Bejean et al.

In the 7/8/03 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 46, 47 and 48-50 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious in view of the Watson and Bejean et al. patents, discussed above, stating Watson discloses all of the elements of the adjustable length binding of these claims except the use of a spring-type latch mechanism. The Examiner then states Bejean et al. disclose the spring-type latch mechanism of these claims and asserts it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the Watson binding with the spring-type latch mechanism of Bejean et al. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Watson discloses a snowshoe having an adjustable binding (304) that includes a rear binding portion (heel cup) (312), a base portion (314) integral with the rear binding portion and a forward binding portion (316) movable relative to the rear binding portion. The forward binding portion may be secured to the base portion at any of a number of positions to change the distance between the forward binding portion and the rear binding portion so that a snowshoer may adjust the binding to the length of his/her boot. A boot is held in the binding with a metatarsal strap (306) and a toe strap (310).

The Bejean et al. patent is as discussed above in connection with the anticipation rejection in view of the same patent.

Regarding claims 46 and 47, these claims depend from amended independent claim 42 discussed above in connection with the anticipation rejection of claim 42 in view of the Bejean et al. patent. As discussed there, Bejean et al. do not disclose the latch configuration of claim 42 from which claims 46 and 47 depend. Watson does not disclose this latch configuration, nor

would this configuration have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention in view of design choice. Therefore, the cited combination of the Watson and Bejean et al. patent does not render claims 46 and 47 obvious.

Regarding amended independent claim 46, this claim requires, among other things, a self-clamping latch that is self-clamping into engagement with a receiver upon application of a force by an engagement member to the latch. Again, this self-clamping action is described above in detail relative to the anticipation rejection in view of the Bejean et al. patent. Neither Watson nor Bejean et al. disclose or suggest such a self-clamping latch. Nor would it have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide either the Watson or Bejean et al. binding with a self-clamping latch. Therefore, the present combination does not render obvious amended independent claim 48, nor claims 49 and 50 that depend therefrom.

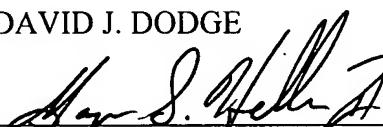
For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that the present rejection is improper.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 32-35 and 42-64 are in condition for allowance. Therefore, prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited. If any issues remain, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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